

**ALASKA'S BENEFITS TO SENIORS NOW RANK AMONG THE NATION'S BEST**

# A New Direction

**Introducing**

*Senior*  
**CARE**

## A New Program for Alaska Seniors



Governor Murkowski believes that Alaskans should be provided the opportunity to direct and have access to necessary medical care as close to home and community as possible. The governor is committed to protecting access to prescription drugs for seniors, as well as providing better access to senior services. This commitment brought about some new services to help Alaska seniors in a program called "SeniorCare," which

will provide help with prescription drugs, access to healthcare, and information about senior benefits, senior resources and referrals.

### **NEW! "SeniorCare"**

The Senior Assistance Program has been brought under a new program called "SeniorCare." Eligible seniors will soon be provided an option to receive a prescription drug benefit in lieu of cash assistance as provided under the Senior Assistance Program. A prescription drug benefit will be offered to an additional group of eligible seniors needing assistance. The "SeniorCare" prescription drug benefit is anticipated to be offered April 2004, pending legislative approval.

### **NEW! "SeniorCare" Prescription Drug Benefit**

Anticipated to start in April, this program will provide a bridge for seniors needing assistance until the new federal Medicare prescription drug program goes into effect in 2006. Seniors who qualify for the Senior Assistance Program (135 percent of the poverty level), and who do not receive Medicaid prescription drug coverage, will be provided a choice between the new "SeniorCare" prescription drug subsidy of \$1,600 a year (prorated) or to continue with cash assistance. Together with the \$600 Medicare subsidy to begin this spring, these eligible seniors opting for the "SeniorCare" prescription drug benefit will have a combined benefit of \$2200 a year. Additionally, seniors between 135 percent and 150 percent of poverty level will receive a prescription drug benefit of \$1000 a year.

### **"SeniorCare" Senior Assistance Program**

Currently, Alaskans 65 and older at 135 percent of poverty level can receive cash assistance of \$120 per month. By April, the seniors who qualify for this program will be offered a new option of receiving the "SeniorCare" prescription drug benefit in lieu of the cash benefit, for a total drug subsidy of \$2,200. With a higher income eligibility level than Adult Public Assistance, the Senior Assistance Program now helps over 7,600 seniors – about 15 percent of whom had never received the Longevity Bonus. Alaska will spend more than \$9 million on this program in the current fiscal year.

### **Total Medicaid Program Assistance**

Prescriptions, medical care, hospitalization and other services are provided to more than 7,000 elderly eligible Alaskans at a cost of \$119.6 million a year. Alaska spends almost \$100 million on prescription drugs annually through Medicaid, with 25 percent annual cost increases expected in the future.

### **NEW! Medicaid Preferred Drug List**

The Preferred Drug List, scheduled to be in place by early 2004, will contain costs for prescription drugs provided to those receiving Medicaid. The Preferred Drug List will protect Alaska low-income seniors' access to prescription drugs, and will provide a valuable resource for all seniors to compare prescription drug costs. Once approved, the list will be made available through the Alaska Senior Information Office, allowing seniors to work with their physicians to identify cost effective drugs that are right for them.

### **NEW! Senior Information Office**

Find a one-stop resource and referral for benefits and services for seniors in the State of Alaska. Scheduled to be in place by mid-January, the Alaska Senior Information Office will provide a statewide toll-free telephone number for information on services available to seniors, including: an up-to-date directory of local physicians who accept Medicaid and Medicare clients, available programs and services including "SeniorCare," prescription drug information and assistance for seniors.

### **Assistance with Medicare Costs for Low-Income Seniors**

Premium, co-pay and deductible coverage is provided to those who qualify.

### **330 Clinics/Denali Commission**

Federally funded clinics are being constructed in rural communities with assistance from the Denali Commission, to provide greater access for Medicaid and Medicare patients.

**FOR INFORMATION CALL: ALASKA SENIOR INFORMATION OFFICE**  
Statewide: 1-800-478-6065 • Anchorage: 907-269-3680

Alaska Department of Health & Social Services Division of Senior and Disabilities Services